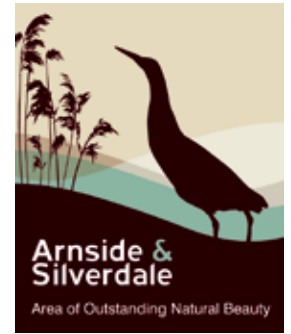


Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment



Prepared by: Arnside & Silverdale AONB Partnership and Land Use Consultants in conjunction with Lancashire County Council, Lancaster City Council, South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria County Council and Natural England

November 2015



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1 Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 This Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (LSCA) for Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was prepared by LUC for the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Partnership. The project was guided by a Project Steering Group, consisting of a number of partner organisations including Natural England, Arnside & Silverdale AONB Partnership, Lancashire County Council, and Cumbria County Council. The lead AONB officer and other AONB officers, as well as volunteers for the AONB also contributed to the project. It was also informed by wider stakeholder contribution. **Figure 1.1** depicts the boundary of the AONB.
- 1.2 The LSCA will be used to inform the development and implementation of AONB Management Plan policies. This chapter sets out the background and purpose of the study, in addition to the policy context and overarching national and regional Landscape Character Assessment framework for Arnside and Silverdale's LSCA.

Background

Background and Context

- 1.3 The Arnside & Silverdale AONB is a nationally protected landscape (see **Figure 1.2**) and is internationally important for its wildlife (see **Figure 1.3**). Its special qualities are recognised through the area's status as an AONB, first proposed by the National Parks Committee in July 1947.
- 1.4 The AONB designation affords statutory protection to the area under the provision of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949¹, confirmed by Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000². Natural England, the government agency charged with designating areas for their landscape qualities, states that the primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. In pursuing the primary objective of designation, account should be taken of the need to safeguard agriculture, forestry, and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development. Promoting opportunities for recreation is not an objective of designation but AONBs should be used to meet the demands for recreation as far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other users.

Arnside & Silverdale AONB

- 1.5 Arnside & Silverdale AONB is a unique landscape of national importance, on the border between north Lancashire and south Cumbria, adjoining Morecambe Bay. It was designated in 1972 and is one of England's smallest AONBs covering an area of approximately 75km², of which 30km² comprises intertidal sand and mudflats.
- 1.6 Although the Arnside & Silverdale AONB is relatively small, it is a distinctive area comprising a mosaic of intertidal flats, bay saltmarshes and lagoons, lowland mosses, coastal limestone pastures, inland pastures and parklands, and wooded limestone hills and pavements. The AONB seascapes combine extensive areas of Morecambe Bay with the River Kent and the River Keer estuaries. The lowland landscapes comprise a diversity of low mosses and wetland landscapes contrasting with the enclosed limestone pastures and areas of historic parkland. Wooded limestone hills and pavements rise above the lowland landscapes.

¹ National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

² Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

- 1.7 The area boasts an extraordinary range of species including many that are nationally rare and scarce (such as the High Brown Fritillary butterfly, Lady's-slipper Orchid, and diverse habitats (such as native woodlands, reedbeds, coastal saltmarshes, and intertidal flats), mosaic limestone pavements, low limestone hills (such as Arnside Knott and Warton Crag), ancient woodlands, mosses, orchards and meadows, in addition to an impressive coastal setting with extensive views over Morecambe Bay and the Lake District to the west and north, as well as views towards the Yorkshire Dales and the Forest of Bowland to the east and south. The small scale, but complex nature of the landforms within the AONB gives a feeling of being enclosed within the valleys which contrasts with the expansive scenery from higher ground and along the coast.
- 1.8 As well as AONB designation, over two thirds of the AONB is subject to additional statutory protection for its international or national biodiversity, geological or heritage importance (for example there are 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI]) or is designated for its local importance as a local wildlife or geological site.
- 1.9 There are approximately 7,560 people living in the AONB, mostly in the vibrant communities of Arnside, Silverdale, Warton, Storth, Sandside, Beetham and the Yealands.
- 1.10 The Arnside & Silverdale AONB Special Qualities Report describes the uniqueness of the AONB: *"Arnside & Silverdale AONB is an extraordinary place. From the simple beauty of the Lady's-slipper Orchid to the shining sands of Morecambe Bay, the area is simply awe-inspiring – full of natural spectacles, stunning views and a surprise to be discovered around every corner...The special qualities of Arnside & Silverdale AONB are what makes the area nationally important and give the area a strong 'sense of place', reinforced by the fact that the area's complex mosaic of landscape types and habitats occurs within such a small geographical area".*

Special Qualities of the Arnside & Silverdale AONB

- 1.11 The following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the AONB special qualities. The complete list of special qualities of the Arnside & Silverdale AONB is contained in **Appendix 1**.
- **Outstanding landscape and spectacular views:** a highly diverse mosaic of limestone hills, woodlands, wetlands, pastures and coast, with spectacular views and an impressive setting.
 - **Unique limestone geology:** rare and distinctive Carboniferous limestone geology with extensive areas of limestone pavement, low coastal cliffs, extensive folding and faulting and notable fossil assemblages.
 - **Morecambe Bay – a stunning seascape:** the largest intertidal area in the UK with extensive intertidal flats and saltmarshes, home to thousands of breeding waders and wildfowl.
 - **Rare and precious habitats:** an outstanding number and mix of priority habitats within a small area creating a mosaic that is home to an amazing diversity of wildlife.
 - **Internationally and nationally important species:** an amazing diversity of species, many of which are uncommon in a national or international context.
 - **Rich sense of history:** heritage reflecting thousands of years of human occupation and the agricultural and industrial past of the area.
 - **Distinctive settlement character:** the characteristic design and detailing of stone buildings and the layout of settlements.
 - **Strong community and culture:** vibrant rural communities strongly identified with the AONB and the local landscape.
 - **Opportunities to enjoy the countryside:** a network of narrow lanes and paths offering wonderful opportunities to enjoy quiet recreation such as walking, cycling and wildlife watching.
 - **Sense of tranquillity, space and place:** a place of inspiration, spiritual refreshment, clear and unpolluted air, peace and quiet and unique character.
 - **A highly designated area:** a large number of local, national and international designations for biological, geological and historical interest.

Purpose of the Assessment

- 1.12 The previous Arnside & Silverdale AONB Statutory Management Plan³ (2009-2014) identified a need to carry out a new landscape and seascape character assessment (LSCA) for the AONB which integrates with wider national, regional and local authority work. The original landscape and seascape character assessment, as reported in *The Arnside and Silverdale Landscape*⁴, was prepared for The Countryside Commission in 1997 and pre-dates the current guidance for England and Scotland.
- 1.13 The purpose of this assessment is to identify and describe the key elements and qualities that make up the distinctive landscape character and seascape of the AONB and classify its distinctive character types and areas (see **Chapter 5 The Landscape and Seascape Classification**). The assessment also identifies the inherent sensitivity of the AONB's landscape and seascape character, current and anticipated forces for change, particularly in relation to climate change and sets out recommendations for future management and protection of the nationally important AONB landscape and the adjoining areas that form the setting to it.
- 1.14 The landscape and seascape character assessment is intended as a resource and source of information for all, including land owners and tenants, developers, land managers, conservation bodies, Natural England, the AONB Partnership, Cumbria and Lancashire local authorities. The information contained within it contributes to the evidence base underpinning planning policy (see **Appendix 2 Policy Context**). The assessment also draws on what people value about the AONB which was gained through an extensive consultation process that included, amongst other things, a series of workshops which were held in the AONB with interested stakeholders. It is strongly recommended that this assessment should be read in conjunction with appropriate land management plans, especially the 'Arnside & Silverdale AONB Statutory Management Plan 2014-2019'⁵.
- 1.15 The landscape and seascape character assessment and guidelines can be used for the following purposes:
- informing the development and implementation of AONB management plan policies;
 - acting as a tool for spatial planning;
 - guiding land owners, land managers, tenants and developers in appropriate land use, management and development proposals;
 - assessment of planning applications;
 - understanding landscape and seascape sensitivity and capacity for change;
 - developing future landscape and seascape strategies and action plans;
 - helping prioritise land and coastal management;
 - responding to and informing other strategies;
 - engaging partners in understanding the character of the AONB;
 - as a baseline for monitoring change; and
 - forming part of the Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit.

³ Arnside & Silverdale Partnership, 2009. *Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Statutory Management Plan 2009-2014*. Arnside: Arnside & Silverdale Partnership.

⁴ Woolerton Dodwell Associates, 1997. *The Arnside and Silverdale Landscape: A landscape assessment prepared for The Countryside Commission*. Cheltenham: Countryside Commission.

⁵ Arnside & Silverdale Partnership, 2014. *Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Statutory Management Plan 2014-2019*. Arnside: Arnside & Silverdale Partnership.

The European Landscape Convention

- 1.16 The European Landscape Convention⁶ (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. Created by the Council of Europe, the convention promotes landscape protection, management and planning, and European co-operation on landscape issues. The ELC became binding in the UK from March 2007. The ELC defines landscape as:
- "An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"* [Article 1 – Definitions].
- 1.17 This new AONB-wide LSCA which is fully aligned with and meets the requirements of the ELC recognises the importance of all landscapes and seascapes, and includes appropriate guidelines for their protection, management and future planning.

The Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment Framework

- 1.18 This LSCA updates and widens the scope of the previous landscape character assessment⁷. The study integrates with other LCA work which exists at county and regional level, ensuring consistency and interpretability. It is a detailed local level assessment, undertaken at 1:25000 scale that fits within this wider framework of studies.
- 1.19 At a national level, the landscape of the AONB is largely classified as part of the Morecambe Bay Limestones National Character Area (NCA), with a small area falling within the Morecambe Coast and Lune Estuary NCA (see **Figure 1.4**). Natural England has published detailed profiles of these areas, setting out detailed descriptions, drivers for change, and objectives for the landscape.
- 1.20 At the county level, the AONB falls within both Cumbria and Lancashire; its landscapes and seascapes have been classified within the Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit⁸ and A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire – Landscape Strategy⁹ and Landscape Character Assessment¹⁰. The landscape classifications at the county level are shown in **Figure 1.5**, **Figure 1.6** and **Figure 1.7**.
- 1.21 The relationship of this study with the National Character Areas and county-level landscape character assessments is illustrated in **Diagram 1.1**.

(NOTE: The Regional Landscape Character Framework [Natural England] has been omitted as this document was intended primarily to support regional spatial strategies, a tier of policy making revoked by central government in 2010)

⁶ European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 176).

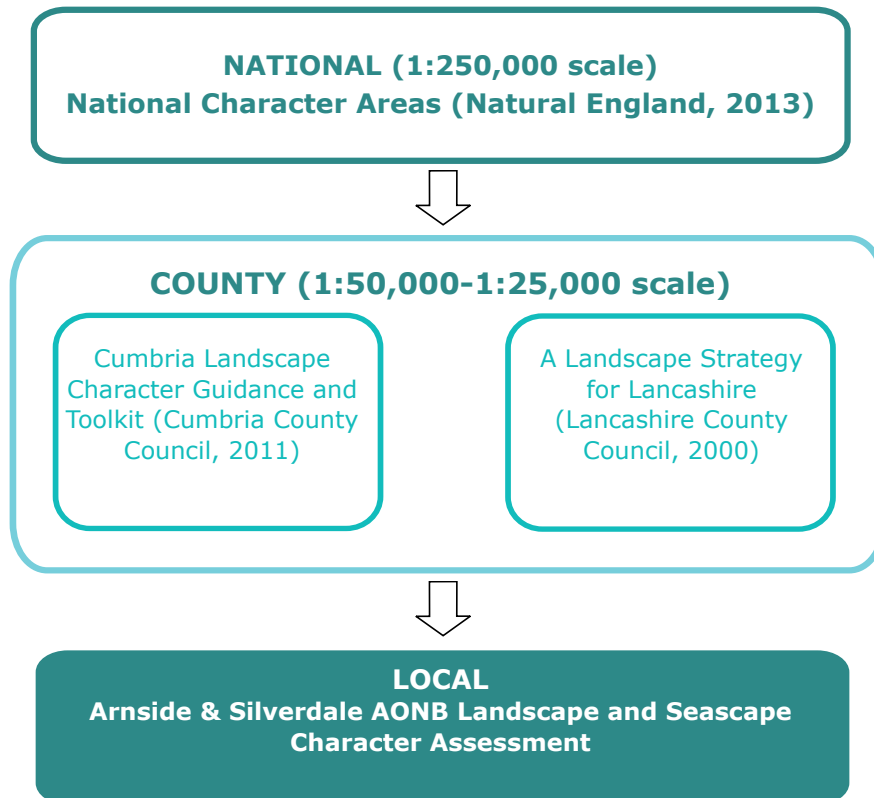
⁷ Woolerton Dodwell Associates, 1997. *The Arnside and Silverdale Landscape: A landscape assessment prepared for The Countryside Commission*. Cheltenham: Countryside Commission.

⁸ Cumbria County Council et al., 2011. *Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit*. Cumbria: Cumbria County Council.

⁹ Lancashire County Council, 2000. *A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire – Landscape Strategy*. Lancashire: Lancashire County Council.

¹⁰ Lancashire County Council, 2000. *A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire – Landscape Character Assessment*. Lancashire: Lancashire County Council.

Diagram 1.1 The Landscape Character Assessment Framework



Structure of the Report

1.22 The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1: Introduction** – provides background information and outlines purpose of the assessment.
- **Section 2: The Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment Methodology** – outlining the approach used in this study and the key stages of the assessment.
- **Section 3: The Evolution of the Arnside and Silverdale Landscape and Seascape** – looking at the physical and cultural influences that have shaped that landscape as it is today.
- **Section 4: Forces for Change**
- **Section 5: The Landscape and Seascape Classification** – sets out the landscape/seascape types and areas.
- **Sections 6, 7 and 8: Landscape and Seascape Descriptions** – describes the landscape and seascape character types and areas in the AONB under the headings of:
 - Section 6: Seascape and Intertidal Landscapes;
 - Section 7: Transitional and Lowland Landscapes; and
 - Section 8: Wooded Limestone Hills.
- **Section 9: The Landscape Character Types Forming the Setting of the AONB** – describes the types comprising the setting to the AONB.
- **Appendix 1:** Extracts from relevant guidance and policies
- **Appendix 2:** Policy context
- **Appendix 3:** Survey sheet example
- **Appendix 4:** Landscape/Seascape Condition and Sensitivity Assessment Methodology
- **Appendix 5:** Glossary of terms

ARNSIDE & SILVERDALE AONB
Landscape and Seascape
Character Assessment

Location

Legend

- Arnside & Silverdale AONB Boundary
- National Park Boundary
- AONB Boundary

County

- Cumbria
- Lancashire
- North Yorkshire

Map Labels: LAKE DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK, YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK, ARNSIDE & SILVERDALE AONB, FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB, FURNESS, MORECAMBE, BAY, BOLTON, LANCASTER, WIGBOROUGH.

Scale: 0 5 10 km

Inset Map: A map of the United Kingdom with a red dot indicating the location of the Arnside & Silverdale AONB in the northwest of England.

LUC Prepared for the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Partnership

Figure 1.2 Landscape Designation

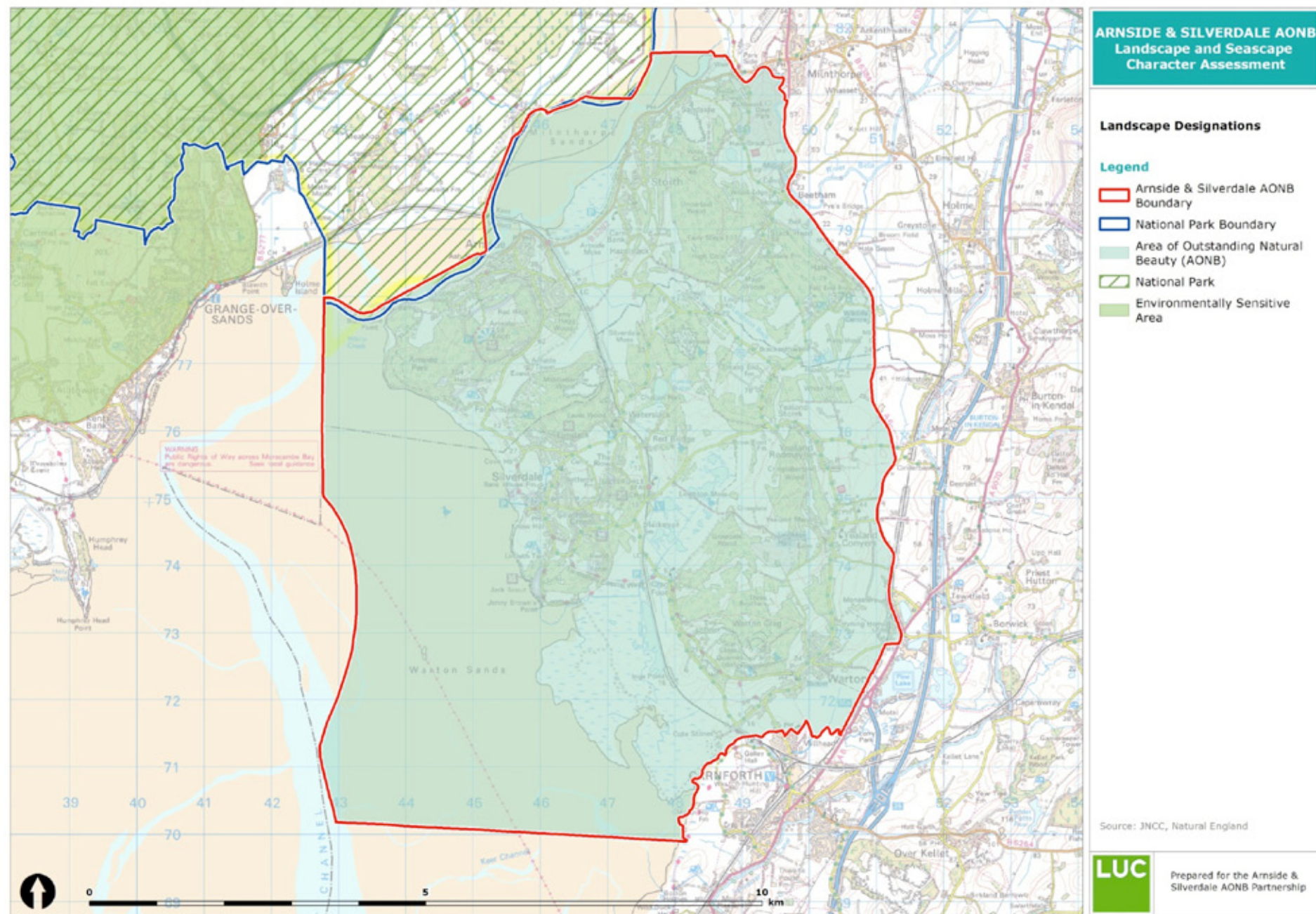


Figure 1.3 International, National & Local Nature Designations

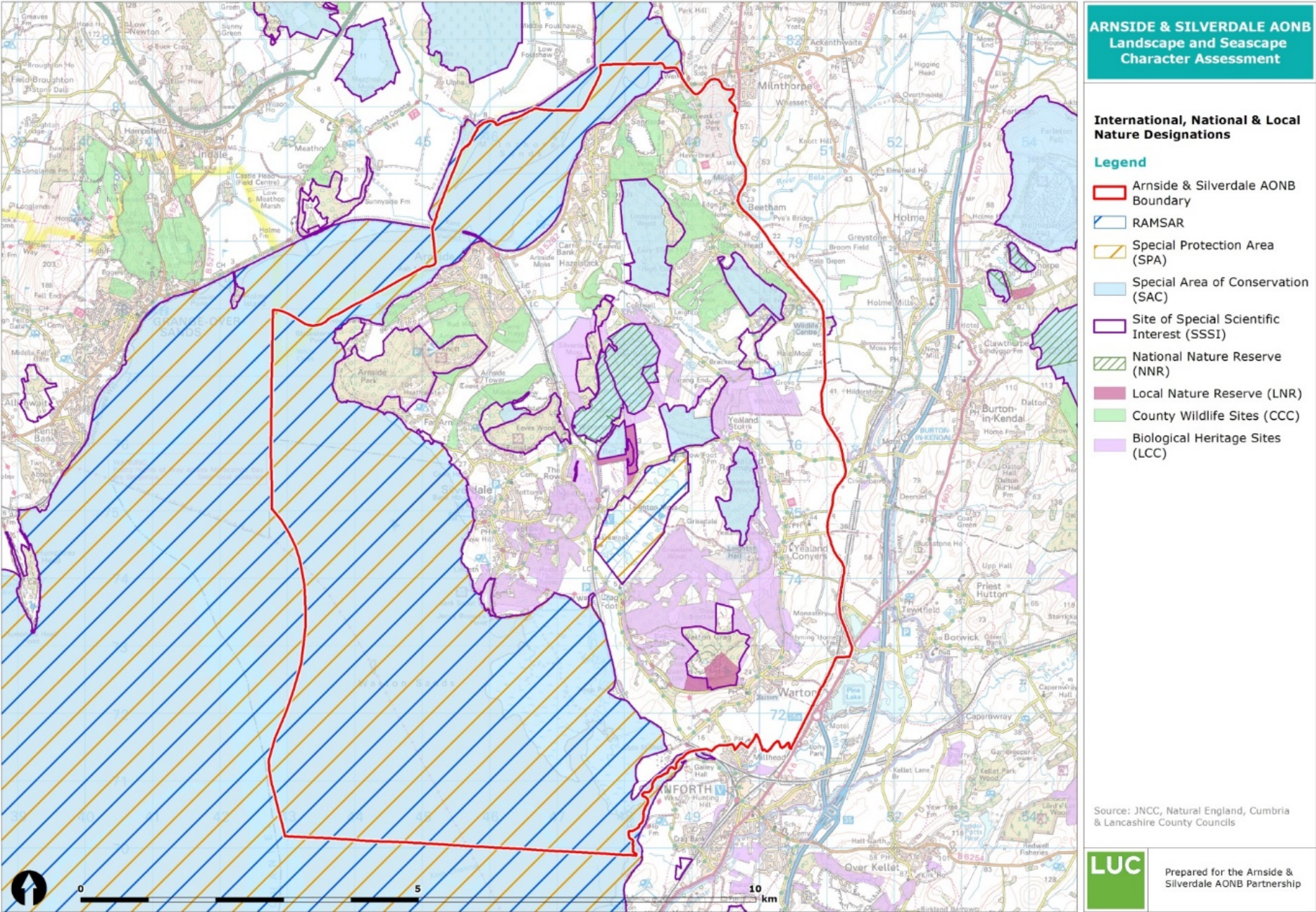


Figure 1.4 National Character Areas

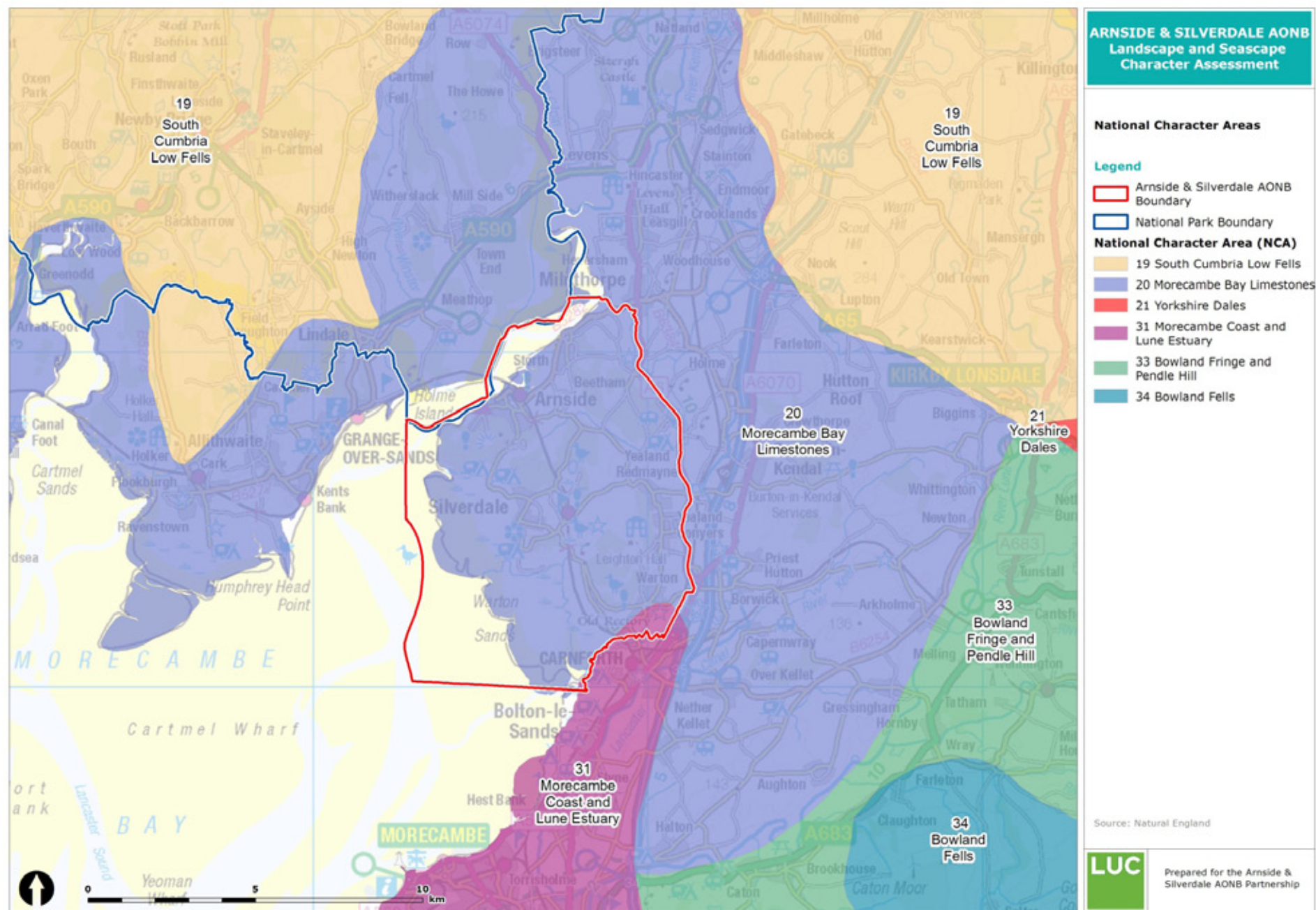
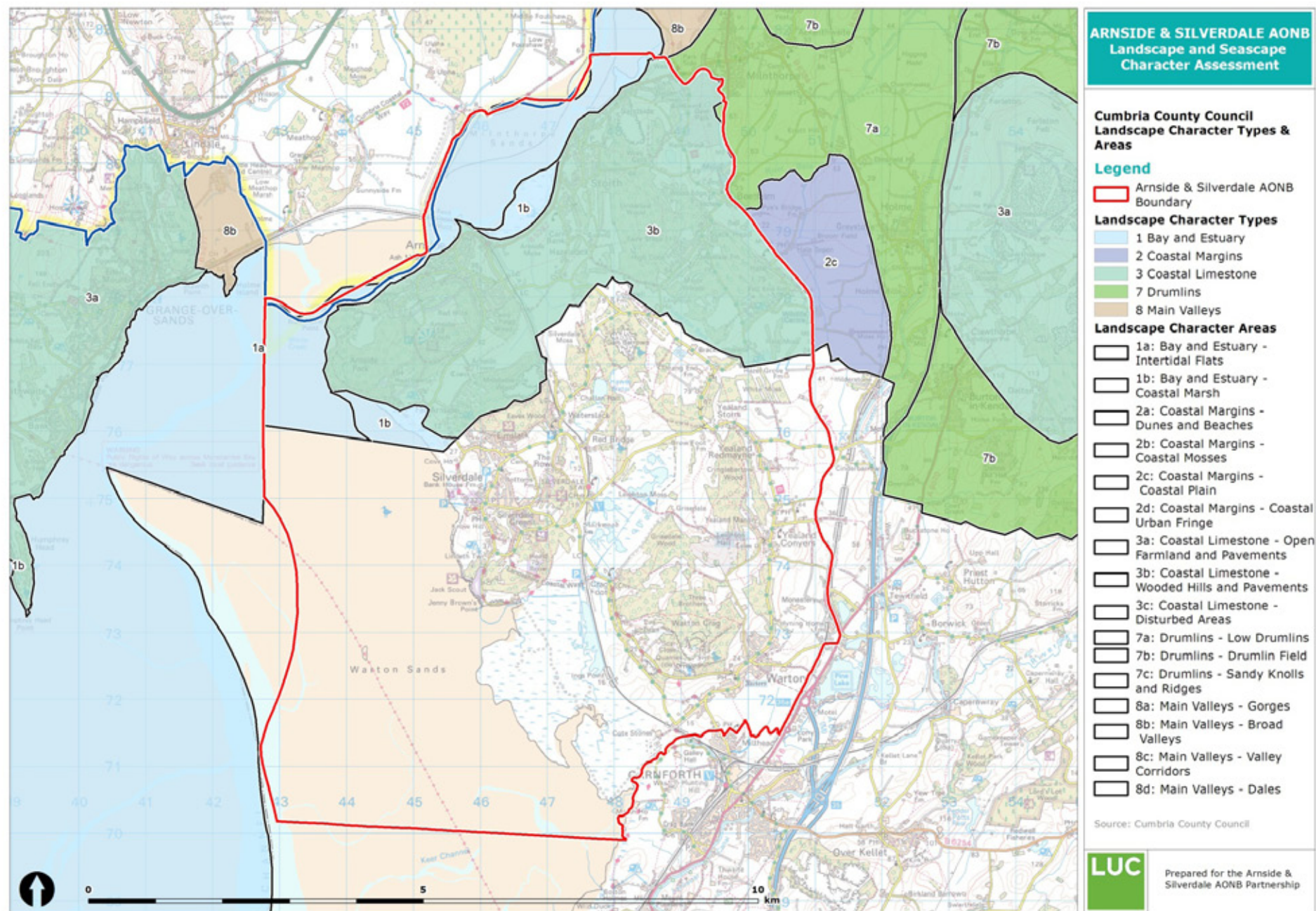


Figure 1.5 Cumbria County Council Landscape Character Types and Areas



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Figure 1.6 Lancashire County Council Landscape Character Types and Areas

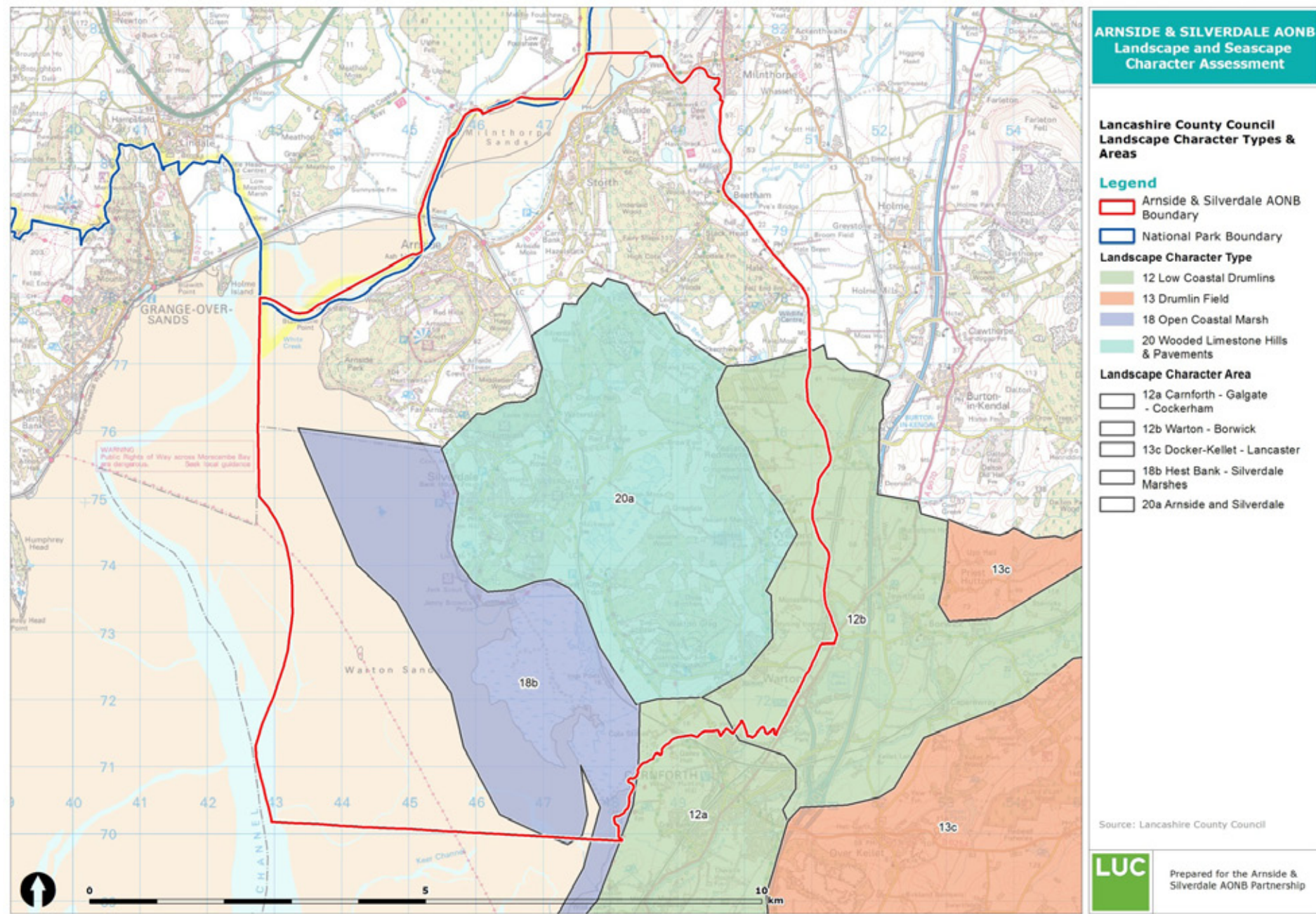
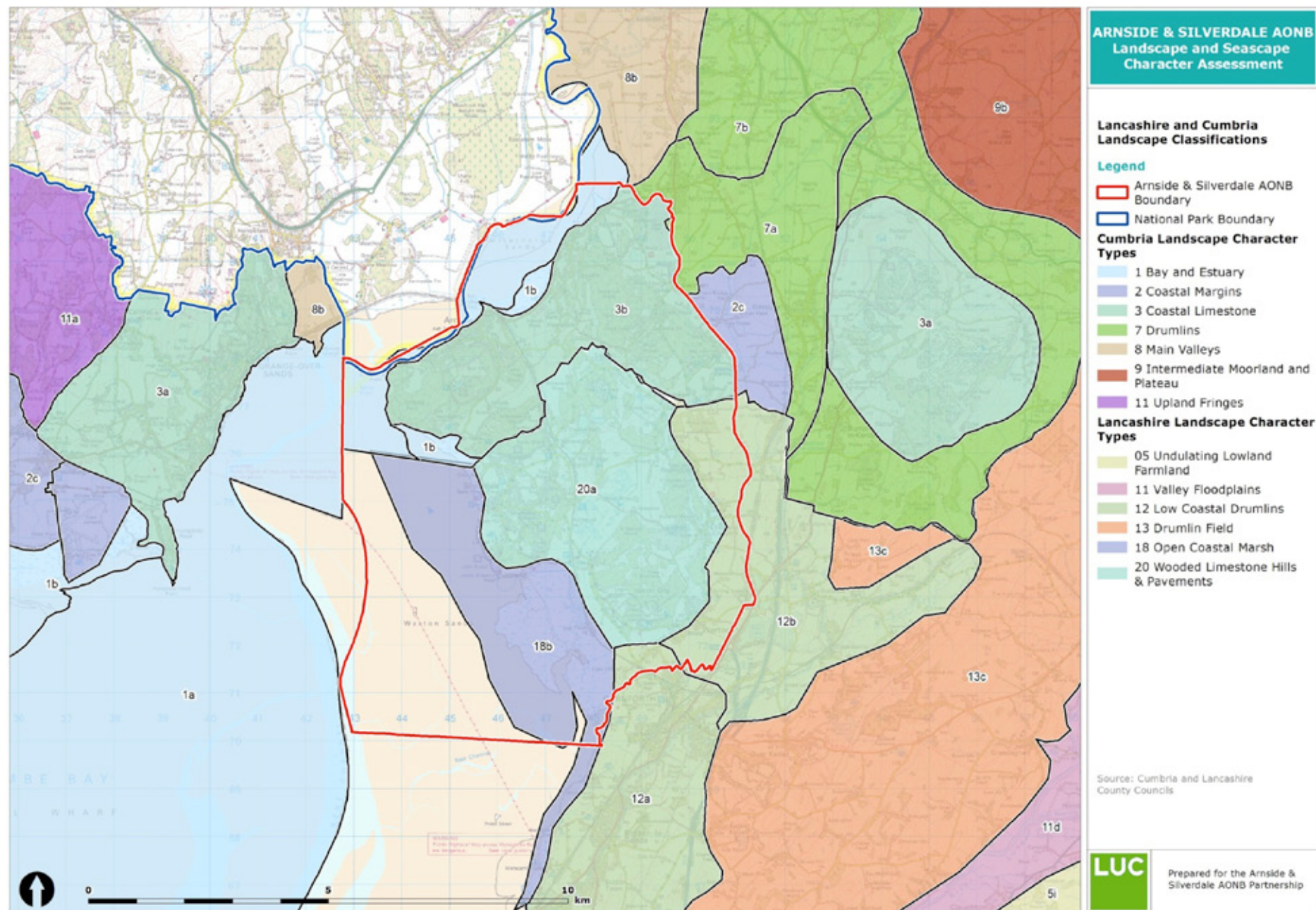


Figure 1.7 Lancashire and Cumbria Landscape Classifications



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